



THE SQUATTERS' UNION

NEWSLETTER OF THE SQUATTERS' UNION OF NSW

February '85

THE SQUATTERS UNION AND YOU

The plan to squat the Glebe Estate was initiated by the Squatters' Union. The Estate squats have been successful so far because of the numbers and the organisation, but not every squatter is lucky enough to be part of a large community. Yet in order to defend what homes we've got, squatters under attack need as much physical support as possible. To fight back, squatters need a squatters' union. Squatting is a defiance of the profit system in housing. We have virtually non-existent legal rights because the law serves the interests of those people with the money to protect the profit system. The extent to which we can defy the system by squatting is limited. To beat the system we need unity. The Squatters' Union fights for unity of squatters with other victims of the system such as tenants and building workers. For example, in an area in Darlinghurst called the TNT Triangle, the landlord, TNT, stood to make hundreds of thousands through redevelopment and reletting the houses to trendies. To make this profit, TNT had to evict both squatters and tenants. To carry out its redevelopment it used un-unionised subcontractors working under sub-standard conditions. Two workers were killed as a result of these conditions. Activists now involved in the Squatters' Union fought for unity of squatters, tenants and workers against our common enemy TNT. This meant fighting for jobs, unionisation and decent conditions for workers, and against evictions of tenants and the defence of homes occupied by squatters. Currently for the Glebe Estate squats we have sought the physical support of the BLF to fight with us in ensuring that no non-union labour is used, black-banning any renovation that means evicting squatters and any physical support they can give squatters. The Squatters' Union stands in solidarity with the BLF against the campaigns of the bosses and the Wran government to deregister it and attack its safety conditions. As the economic crisis bites deeper more and more tenants are finding rent harder to pay. Rent goes up regularly but our wages and dole money do not. As the crisis hits harder more and more tenants will be forced to become squatters. Why pay rent? The rent you pay in this system is determined by interest rates and property values. Only a minimal amount goes into house upkeep.

The Squatters' Union has helped squatters with many aspects of squatting over the past two and a half years; these include finding squats, renovating and cleaning up houses, helping to provide electricity and plumbing, organising squatters to fight eviction, providing legal defences, investigating what negligible rights we have and fighting so-called lefty politicians who refuse to defend squatters and regularly sell them out. We are asking squatters not just to join the Squatters' Union but to give it your physical support.

THE SQUATTERS' UNION MEETS EVERY WEDNESDAY AT 5:30pm,

35 REIDY STREET, ENMORE.

ph: 516 2634

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OPENING UP THE GLEBE ESTATE

The Glebe Estate finally has been squatted en masse. After houses being empty for up to 10 years, more than 100 houses have now been squatted. This mass squat was organised by the Squatters' Union of NSW. After years of seeing houses empty and hearing of and fighting rapid evictions on the Estate when squatters moved in individually, the Union decided the only way to succeed was to squat it en masse.

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Many of the original squatters had applied for housing with the Community Tenancy Scheme but were still unhoused. They included middle-aged migrants, pensioners and young unemployed. They hadn't squatted before yet, surprisingly, they took easily to the risk of squatting. These people were desperate for housing and had received knock-back after knock-back from public housing authorities.

On Saturday, October 6th, there were enough people to occupy about 25 houses, so we decide to go ahead after months of public meetings, organizing support and a few basic material preparations. People moved into the houses and a hive of activity followed what with the cleaning and fixing and confrontations with the State cops who had no powers of arrest on Commonwealth land (these frustrated cops were to seek retribution against the squatters in other ways). That night security guards began checking all "empty" houses, as they usually do to keep people out of public housing, a very important procedure for one of the most efficient evictors of squatters. One other efficient evictor is the state housing authority, i.e., the Housing Commission.

Many more people flooded into the Glebe Estate for houses, and got them. Over the next three days the number of houses occupied increased to 70. Night security patrols were organised by the squatters to protect their homes. In the day people worked on their own and other people's houses to get them into a liveable condition.

Then the Federal government, instead of evicting us, invited us to a discussion where they stated that we were illegal occupants, yet agreed with us that public housing authorities could not cope with the housing crisis. They asked us to hand over three squatted houses so that they could be renovated. They also said they would start Supreme court eviction proceedings.

Many of the original residents on the Estate were confused about what was going on and scared we would be squatting houses which were allocated to tenants. Most residents supported us, except the Residents' Advisory Committee, but were scared to come out publicly in support of us. They were scared of the stand-over tactics of the RAC and the Glebe Estate administration. We issued a letter telling the residents what we were doing and invited them to a squatters' meeting. A few residents turned up and their fears were proved to be unfounded. The meeting passed a resolution saying that houses which had tenants allocated to them would be surrendered. The squatters reason for this surrender was to try and form an alliance with the Estate tenants against the administrators, and the Federal government who were fucking over both groups by keeping squatters out of houses and by not letting the tenants achieve any real rights regarding their tenancy - i.e., no control over evictions, repairs, allocations, etc. The Estate administrators also use heavying tactics against the tenants.

The squatters agreed to give up the three houses to be renovated with the approval of the squatters living in them. This was a concession on our part because no tenants had been allocated to these houses. This was done in the hope of having a better tenant/squatter relationship and to gain public support. A condition of giving up these houses was that union labour be used to renovate them, so as to prevent scabbing by non-union contractors and to be in solidarity with the Builders' Labourers' Federation who have helped squatters in the past. These three houses have now been gutted leaving only a shell, an expensive way of 'providing' houses (40 - 50,000 dollars per house), by destroying houses that are already liveable and building new ones on the bare site.

We decided to approach our local Federal member, 'left-winger' Peter Baldwin. He said he wouldn't intervene to stop the court process, but he would try and stop the cops when they came, basically opting out of the situation whilst he too admitted the inability of all governments to solve the housing crisis. With the perennial issue of the transfer of the Estate from the Federal to the State government raising its head again, the Federal government decided to push the problem off onto the State government. The Federal government decided not to go ahead with court proceedings.

At a meeting with the Housing Commission we brought forward both squatters' and tenants' prospects under the State govt. even though many issues were not resolved as the transfer hadn't occurred. A senior official of the Housing Commission, Mr. Helby, guessed it was silly to evict us but he had to speak to his lawyers first. It seems that the rights of the Glebe Estate tenants are to be eroded e.g. there is to be no consideration to long term residents' families in allocations, apart from the 36 or so already on the list, Mr. Helby said, they will be treated just like other Housing Commission applicants. Yet again we had agreement to our charges of inadequacy and

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ineptitude regarding public housing in general and in particular about the farce that is/was the central register of publicly owned "surplus" housing stock that was ordered by Wran in 1981. This register was to be used by the Housing Commission to get houses for the Emergency Accommodation Unit. Mr. Helby agreed with us in that the Department of Main Roads (where most of the houses come from) were leasing them to the Housing Commission at around full market rental, doing no-one a favour (except the DMR). The DMR and other government departments were also frustrating the Housing Commission's attempts to get their hands on surplus houses instead of selling them off for huge profits (article on DMR profiteering this issue). Indeed these departments have the power to interpret 'surplus' as it suits them and it seems that it most often does not.

Frank Walker, leader of the Left in NSW, was to be the minister responsible for the Glebe Estate after the transfer and it was, after all, good old lefty Frank who had poured his heart out on the subject of homelessness a few months earlier to the tune of "the lucky ones get to sleep in bus shelters" so it was with some optimism that we sought a meeting with him. He wouldn't meet with us and stated on national television that he intends to evict the squatters after the transfer goes through. He mightn't even wait until the houses were needed for renovations.

We organised an occupation of his office to get a meeting with him. He hid behind closed doors and called in the cops and four squatters were arrested for trespass. He conceded by agreeing to a meeting after the transfer had gone through during which he said thanks very much for adding wait to his negotiations with the Federal Dept., he got a bargain but we had to go. He did concede us one of his secretaries, with whom we were to converse, who in turn conceded us a copy of the Housing Commission's singles policy and some application forms and tells us to have faith and little else of a serious nature.

Estate squatters have said that we are only interested in negotiating as long as it allowed all of us to stay in our houses. Mr. Walker's representative, however, seems to be pushing, in effect and with an extraordinary dose of optimism given the Housing Commission's record, re-housing elsewhere for those deemed to be suitable. She, Kath MacKenzie, offers us the chance to be assessed by "more sympathetic" YACS officers who would recommend to the Housing Commission's Special Allocations Committee, a process frighteningly similar to the one proposed by Mr. Helby a couple of months ago. He had the honesty to admit that it entailed lots of ifs and lots of evictions.

The Estate squatters know that the only way they could hold their homes was to be united and organised. Originally, nightly meetings were called to organise repairs, tactics, keeping squatters informed, media releases, resident letters and getting support from unions. Also organising to defend people arrested or hassled by cops. One cops statement "...you're making it hard..we can't get you alone" indicates how unity can be successful.

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COUNCIL BETRAYS TENANTS

The Inner City Tenants' Service, after seven years of funding by the Sydney City Council, is to be evicted onto the street. Council has stopped paying the rent at 280A Victoria Street, Kings Cross. The Service is essential and has worked extremely hard to build widespread respect among tenants as one of the most effective tenancy services in N.S.W., especially as it operates in an area with the worst landlord/tenant disputes.

The Tenants' Service first found out about its eviction by reading the Council minutes - why weren't they informed? When tenants demonstrated against Council, the councillors gave them hollow sympathy. So tenants supporting the Service arrived at the following Council Community Services committee meeting to secure the future of the Service. Most committee members reluctantly supported the Service and agreed to pay the rent whilst the Properties Department found new premises. They wouldn't give

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any concrete undertaking to secure the relocation of the Service for good reason - they wanted the Service out. After two months the Properties Dept. couldn't find any suitable premises except in the middle of the city where there are no residents. Even Independent Claire Vernon was amazed at the lack of effect but couldn't do anything about it.

At a full Council meeting where all the parties in Council spoke well of the Service and extended the time - the Tenants' Service could stay saying it should find new premises itself and undertakings were given that the Council would fund it at least for the rent. Well the Tenants' Service found premises and put it to the Community Services committee to fund the Service as before, but was told "Come back in February, there's no money" even though funds have been allocated to the Service this year, in the Council budget.

With no rent paid since last November, eviction proceedings against the ICTS are expected at any moment; holdover funding (until Feb.) was not approved by the Council and the all-volunteer staff have it on good authority that re-funding in the Feb/March allocations is unlikely because of political opposition from within Council. The ICTS has obviously been systematically screwed by all sections of the Council, ranging from the (expected) hostility of the Liberal Party and the 'centre/right' of the Labor Party, those already notorious for being the lackeys of landlords and developers, to the 'left' Labor and Independent dominated Community Services Committee who showed their true colours when courage and consistency were called for to fulfill the promises they made to and trust they expected from the many poor people who depend on the continuation of the ICTS.

The people who staff the ICTS will continue to work at 280A Victoria Street and support the struggles of tenants and squatters. They can be contacted on 331 7195.

MUNDEY, BLOODY MUNDEY

Jack Munday's face was red from embarrassment at a recent Council meeting. He didn't like being reminded that 10 years ago he was trying to prevent the eviction of residents in Victoria Street, Kings Cross, as a B.L.F. Secretary, and today he actively supports Council's court eviction of Jim Williams from his Council owned squat in St. Peters.

Jim Williams moved into an untenanted, derelict house and has renovated it, Council inspectors received complaints from his nearest neighbours. These complaints were racist complaints. The Council bureaucrats answer to the problem was to "get rid of him". Legal proceedings were commenced to evict Jim on the basis that his racist neighbours didn't like his colour.

Council claims to understand the plight of the homeless, after all they've set up a Homeless People's Information Service. Now it suits them not to turn a blind eye, and they've decided that racist complaints and Jack Munday's old grudge against Jim are good enough reasons to evict. You see Jim and Jack had a falling out ten years ago when Jim was a B.L.F. organiser. Jack's answer to the problem was, "That crazy bastard, evict him!"

The Council has no plans for Jim's home, besides vague renovation plans that have never been authorised, and certainly never been started. These plans have been shelved for the past year. When the Council's Properties Committee was approached at a recent meeting for support for Jim - it had never heard of the matter, let alone made a decision on it. Yet Jim Williams has now gone through the Courts - and has been evicted. The full Council hadn't considered the case either!

So Jack Munday and Labor Alderman Stan Ashmore-Smith, both aware of the housing crisis and Jim's position as an aboriginal squatter, were prepared to allow racist complaints to stand as a reason for the eviction. The Council denies that these are the reasons for the eviction but freely admit that these complaints initiated the proceedings.

DARLO SQUATS - on the road to destruction?

Labor Minister Brereton has launched the plan for the Eastern Distributor. It's now going to go 'underground'. However, only part of the road is to be submerged. This will no doubt confuse some that the effect on Darlinghurst will be minimal. It will be convenient to trendies who won't have a freeway to block out their view of picturesque Darlinghurst. However, for us squatters the message is clear. Our homes will go unless we fight for them. The Antifreeway Committee is busily writing letters about how unfair it is that the Environmental Impact statement is being carried out by the DMR and this is true. However, for us squatters there is only one impact on our environment that counts. If the freeway goes through we will lose our homes. No Environmental Impact Study will defend squatting because squatting is against the law. In fact for many demolition of the squats will improve the environment. Liberal backbencher and local State member Michael Yabsley reckons squatters are a mob of anarchists, drug pushers and prostitutes. Apparently these people are not entitled to shelter. Meriton Apartments the developers in Palmer Street are having trouble selling off the units because of the squats across the road. They will welcome the removal of squatters homes on the nonsubmerged part of the freeway. For us, our right to shelter and our homes is the best reason to stop the freeway. Whether the freeway is built above ground, or ground level below the ground or even a tunnel our homes are threatened.

Brereton has made a clear decision to support property owners and car owners against us poor squatters. No amount of polite lobbying, alternative plans for transport, etc will stop this. One public meeting called by the AntiFreeway Committee was largely a public relations exercise for light rail (Hasn't it occurred to the committee the possibility of both a freeway and light rail?) The only way to stop Brereton, the Wran Labor Government and their big business allies is to fight them. Many resident and tenant committees have tried to influence Brereton by showing that they are respectable citizens. They are treated with utter contempt. It is those tenants who have been prepared to fight who have been listened to.

The Antifreeway Action Committee is busily finding favor amongst social workers, community tenancy scheme workers, local tenants' groups but its doing this by showing its' respectability. At a public meeting called by the AntiFreeway Committee, former B.L.F. activist Tom Hogan, now on the committee, in a quest for respectability, dissociated himself from the anarchists, prostitutes and drug addicts that Yabsley claims should

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be bulldozed. It is an accident that the AntiFreeway Committee leaflet NO to the Distributor does not mention the word squatter. This word is obviously too dirty for the middle class, social worker and Labor Party allies sought by the committee. The AntiFreeway Committee may be successful in winning respectable allies but only on the condition they don't upset the system. We need allies who will fight with us. As the leaflet No to the Distributor says "Inner City residents have beaten the DMR on other roads" They did not do this by writing letters to M.P.'s with alternative road, transport and housing arrangements. It's time we revived the militant tradition that Jack Mundy and Tom Hogan have conveniently forgotten in order to pursue their respectable careers on the Sydney City Council.

pit, sweet pit...

" This has got to be the most fuckin'-est dump of all. This is the pits!"

We've all heard it before - not once, not twice, not even a polite three times, but hundreds. Every new squat is the pits. Every time we've thought about having a working bee, or looking at another empty house that "only-needs-a-couple-of-hours-if-we-all-pitch-in", and finally set a date in some fit of guilt or ill-health, we've discovered yet another house that can easily (if not only) be described as the worst ever pit.

Hour after hour sweeping up dust that has been allowed to do pretty much as it pleases. Not only do you have to control it, but you have to box it and dump it in the back lane as a gift for the local garbos - only to discover when you return that the damn stuff has beaten you back.

Hour after hour of torturous, contortionist callisthenics just to catch a glimpse of just how come the sink is sitting at that angle, that looks impossible but would suit us because now the fridge will fit in if only the blasted thing realised it was a sink and would drain.

Most of the houses we've been through have some characteristic tell-tale mark, like a dent where the wrench was implanted (and surgically removed) when the plumbing had finally given up after hours of work, surrendered and left, leaving us still without water.

Let me tell you that any member of the Squatter's Union can smell out another house fit to be called the pits, from 10 miles. There is something that makes it worth it, or we must be raving idiots, is all I can say. After all that we still stand firm just inside the front door when the cops call round to throw us out and after all they probably are doing us a favour kicking us back to the civilization of gutters that have sewerage connected.

But it's our sweat and our tears and our pain that makes that dump our home and (by the way) it's our sweat and our tears and our pain that makes that dump your home. You could at least show up and offer advice, you bastards. I guess you'll just never know what it feels like to leave a mark on a house if you don't. Even if it's just the place where you missed the nail with the hammer, or where you went crazy with the Blue-tac because you know the landlord can't take your bond and you're a little given to displays.

We need your help to house people like you, like me, give us a hand, join the Squatter's Union and learn how to feel exhausted, tired, irritable, cranky, mean, unpleasant, hostile, aggro, ... for all the right reasons.

State Govt. Makes Fast Bucks From Homelessness

With a chronic housing shortage in NSW, 55,000 people on Housing Commission waiting lists and thousands more homeless, minister Brereton is responsible for selling off government houses all over Sydney - evicting squatters and tenants so that their homes can be sold.

Early in the 1960's the DMR (Department of Main Roads) began buying up large numbers of homes along the proposed path of the major highway, the Western Distributor, in suburbs throughout Sydney - mainly Glebe, Rozelle, Annandale and Leichhardt. Many people in these houses were evicted and the houses left empty to rot until the expressway might or might not go through.

People have occupied these houses and fixed them up, making use of badly needed housing which successive NSW governments have been prepared to leave empty.

Not only have the DMR been prepared to leave houses empty while people are homeless - people renting properties owned by the DMR have been forced to pay up to full market rental for houses on which the DMR carries out no repairs. After all why spend money on repairing houses that are to be bulldozed when the money can be better spent by Brereton renovating his office (which unfortunately isn't to be bulldozed).

Twenty years later when Wran came into power the Western Distributor was scrapped. The DMR then had the 'problem' of the houses they had bought up. IN FACT IT IS NOT A PROBLEM. MOST PREVIOUSLY VACANT GOVERNMENT OWNED HOUSES ARE BEING LIVED IN BY PEOPLE WHO NEED HOMES AND WHO HAVE TAKEN CONTROL OF THEM, DOING THEIR OWN REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE. The DMR however sees the poor, housing themselves under their own control, as a problem. So what is their solution?

The Dmr may say that they are not responsible for housing that their responsibility lies with roads. Why then are they responsible for creating government income through housing speculation? Houses bought cheaply by the DMR using government rights to resume properties under the Public Works Acts are now being sold off to private speculators, bringing sometimes a thousand percent profit to line DMR coffers and easy money to speculators who buy from the DMR and resell immediately at higher prices.

DRUMMOYNE/FIVEDOCK:

In this area the DMR bought a large number of properties 10 years ago for the Distributor and then resold them at market values over the last few years. A few of these houses were squatted and the DMR to resolve the problem decided to sell these houses to the Housing Commission. It was clear that the DMR only handed over these houses because they had people in occupation. One household was evicted by the Housing Commission, all done recipients except for a woman with a child on Supporting Parents Benefit - for some reason they didn't qualify to be housed.

The Housing Commission didn't like handling the eviction and vacant possession was sought in two other cases of people occupying DMR houses. Both households were evicted by the DMR for the Housing Commission.

GLEBE:

The Glebe section of the Western Distributor saw the largest occupation. About 70 properties were occupied in 1975. Again the DMR probably would have resold the properties at market value, now 10 years later, but for the people in occupation. The DMR arranged to sell at the Evaluator General's rates the houses to the Housing Commission. The people in occupation have been promised to be rehoused in Housing Commission accommodation in the area when renovations and construction have been done. But the Housing Commission doesn't always honour their promises and it will be interesting to see if indeed these people will be housed or not.

LEICHHARDT/ANNANDALE:

While this area isn't all in the path of the expressway the DMR has bought up a large number of houses, there as in most suburbs of Sydney, under the pretext of 'proposed street widening'. Somehow this widening never happens and the DMR houses are sold or let at current prices.

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In Leichhardt in particular the DMR have a deal with the Leichhardt Council for their mutual benefit. The DMR sets the rent at 8% of the properties value (an approximate market rental value) and the Council manages the property and collects the rent from tenants and passes it on to the DMR less 10% managing fee of course. In other words these government houses are let at market rental by local councils under DMR's orders.

ROZELLE:

From the early 60's onwards the Dmr bought up properties in Rozelle for the Distributor. Many residents were forced to sell their homes at prices much below their real value. It is common that land values drop drastically along the course of a freeway once the plans are announced, and once the area has been 'DMR affected' residents can only sell to the DMR. The dmr has no competition they don't pay real value.

Many of the properties are left empty for years, many were and are rented out and quite a few were demolished. Throughout the 70's the DMR continued to buy up properties for the Freeway - right up until the time the project was abandoned. So now there are quite a few government owned properties in Rozelle.

When it was announced the freeway would not go ahead, the value of the area increased and the DMR quietly sold off houses one by one into the private market at a huge profit - and the DMR weren't the only ones to profit from this situation. For example:- 49 Cook St., Rozelle. Was purchased by the DMR in 1970, tenanted and squatted, the squatters were evicted in 1984 so the property could be sold at 'public' auction which was attended by 3 people only. A representative from the DMR, a buyer and an uninvited representative from the squatters. The house was sold for \$43,000 and put back on the market a week later for \$60,000.

2 Albert St., Rozelle. Bought by the DMR in 1967 for \$7,000 was in the process of being sold to an investor for \$79,000. This is the only interest the DMR have shown in this property. Previously all they did was collect the rent - major repairs weren't done for the elderly tenants; leaking roofs, no windows and holes in the floors.

Houses in Foucart St., Denison St., and Albert St. are also up for sale or in the process of being sold to private investors. The DMR shuns responsibility for their "incidental" tenants. They have no policy on housing, deny they have any connection with housing and leave maintenance up to the tenants themselves, BUT all the while they collect rent, sell properties (at market value even though they have been bought cheaply under pressure) and make huge profits.

NO HOUSING OWNED BY ANY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE SOLD OFF. GOVERNMENT PROPERTY SHOULD BE USED TO HOUSE PEOPLE NOT AS A PROFIT MAKING VENTURE.

Around the time of Wran's election to State Government (1981) he made a directive to all NSW Government departments to hand over all excess housing stock to a central register to be made available to the NSW Housing Commission. "Excess housing stock", however, was left up to each department's discretion and houses that were "suitable" were made available to the Housing Commission. Around 600 houses have been sold or leased at market rents to the Housing Commission from the DMR. This is not only a small percentage of the stock actually in the hands of the DMR, but the DMR has not given or transferred anything to the Housing Commission without a cash settlement. The Housing Commission doesn't do much better than the DMR which pretends it has nothing to do with housing, the Housing Commission has knocked back houses that are in reasonable repair leaving the DMR open slather on some houses that should be used as homes.

Wran's directive was a total sham, an empty gesture. His government has done nothing to help the homeless in NSW and now this "labour" government instructs its departments to liquidate their housing stocks. The only people to benefit from this are private speculators who make a killing reselling DMR properties at higher prices.

Obviously it is not within the government's power to solve the housing crisis, nor do they particularly want to but they should not make it worse! Squatters living in DMR stock are adequately housed. Public Housing is a shambles. STOP THE SALES OF GOVERNMENT HOUSES TO PRIVATE PROFITEERS! LEAVE PEOPLE IN THEIR HOMES!

(P.S. People squatting in DMR houses in Foucart, Denison and Albert Streets, Rozelle have been evicted since this article was written. Some had been in occupation over 2yrs)

...and another one that aint workin'...

COMMUNITY TENANCY SCHEME

Community Tenancy Scheme, according to its publicity, is a housing scheme run by local non-profit community organisations and is funded by State and Federal governments. This funding is used to rent premises and then sub-let to tenants at cheaper rents.

When the CTS started they were overwhelmed with the response. Most closed their lists, some just kept adding names to the bottom.

At the Women's Housing Conference in December, it was passed with no opposition that Community Tenancy Schemes should recommend the Squatters' Union to people on their lists. This conference was comprised mainly of CTS reps from all over NSW - they have been forced to admit that CTS cannot really do anything about the housing crisis.

These reps in typical social worker fashion, commiserated with each other on the difficulty of deciding whether people were needy enough or if they were suitable for the accommodation. Everyone has the right to housing. It is a fallacy of this system that there is a small number of houses for which the homeless must compete.

The major argument used against squatting is security. At this conference a major fear was that CTS would go if Mr. Walker(minister) left the Housing Commission. As it relies on funding it can be cut anytime, if not when he leaves, then surely with a change of government.

CTS is in direct opposition to squatters. They both try to take over abandoned houses. Yet CTS charges 15% of the occupiers income for it. 15%, while less than most rents, is still not good enough. Benefits and pensions are very limited incomes and that 15% can be used more usefully than lining the pockets of greedy landlords.

Each CTS is controlled by its individual group and is not responsible to the others. A CTS group can do what it likes without fear of reprisal as in Leichhardt with CTS officer Gerry van Wyck. Squatters had to be evicted so that this group could take control of the houses. Evicting one group of people to house another is no solution to the housing crisis. Many CTS groups condemn his action in these and other cases yet can do nothing about it.

CTS also encourage people to "contribute" to the running of the scheme - voluntary working bees, childcare, clerical and secretarial work, etc. . In other words paying the extra rent in labour rather than employing people for these jobs. In some schemes it is made quite clear that if you don't want to "contribute" you won't be considered for housing.

The housing crisis cannot be solved by pandering to profit hungry landlords. Landlords love CTS - full regular rents, repairs done free, etc.. Marrickville CTS employed people under a CEP scheme to renovate houses it required. When CTS folds landlords will evict tenants who cannot pay the higher rent and will easily be able to rent their renovated properties to someone else.

Governments will not solve the housing crisis. The Housing Commission and related schemes never have and never will deal adequately with homelessness created by the forces of capitalism that they do not wish to understand or confront. The Housing Commission cannot deal with the 55,000 on its waiting list, a fraction of those who apply who in turn are a fraction only of those working class people who are in housing need.

